

**Remarks by the Honorable Sean O'Keefe
NASA Administrator
Cavalry Club Memorial Day Ceremony
Syracuse, New York
May 31, 2004**

Thank you Doug (Doug Logan, local radio sportscaster) for that very gracious introduction and good evening everyone. What an honor to be introduced by the famous voice of the Syracuse Orange.

It's a real pleasure to be back in this great community. I can't think of a better venue to commemorate the Memorial Day holiday than this historic club during its centennial celebration. It is a grand day today.

I am honored to be in the presence of so many distinguished veterans, including John Cadin, the President of Troop K and Dan Doherty, the President

of Troop D and Col. Jim Smythe, the head of the 174th Fighter Wing Honor Guard.

It is also a tribute to this great club that here tonight are such outstanding public servants as former Syracuse Mayor Bill Walsh and Syracuse Council Person Joan Christiansen.

In the time I do have with you this afternoon I would like to say a few words this Memorial Day about the great debt of gratitude we all owe to the proud patriots who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of liberty's blessings, and indeed to all our service veterans.

Lt. Col. Jack Putnam, Col. Jim Swift, Col. Bob Toole and Col. Hamilton Armstrong were the visionaries in 1904 who founded this Troop, and they sustained this effort for decades. Today, this club is a testimonial to the strength of the American spirit.

Now two days ago in Washington, a grateful nation honored millions of those who served to

preserve freedom with the dedication of the World War II Memorial on the National Mall.

To the Cavalry Club faithful, the words Sicily, Burma, Okinawa, Cherbourg, Ardennes and Rhineland are more than names from the history books. They are places where early members of this club helped make history.

I hope every American get a chance to visit the World War II Memorial. And our country owes a huge debt of gratitude to Senators Bob Dole and George McGovern and NASA's good friend Tom Hanks for helping to lead the effort to build this tribute to America's greatest generation.

The memorial is long overdue, and now holds a place of honor amidst the shrines of democracy. Fittingly, a tablet on the entrance to the Memorial captures its significance with the following words:

"Here in the presence of Washington and Lincoln, one the Eighteenth-Century father and the

other the Nineteenth-Century preserver of our nation, we honor those Twentieth-Century Americans who took up the struggle during the Second World War and made the sacrifices to perpetuate the gift our forefathers entrusted to us: a nation conceived in liberty and justice."

President Roosevelt said in his famous four freedoms speech that we have "no end save victory." The men and women of our World War II generation selflessly left their homes and farms when duty called and worked tirelessly to produce that victory. We are forever in their gratitude.

On this day, in this community, we remember and honor Lt. Vaughan Martin, who served in North Africa, Lt. Fred Garb who participated in the D-Day Invasion of Normandy and Sargent Bill Peckham who served in the Battle of the Bulge.

This generation of selfless Americans also left us with lasting legacies that changed this country. We

would not be the world's leaders in military and civil aviation, and for that matter be the world's leader in space exploration, were it not for the contributions of this generation, among them, the men and women who worked for NASA's predecessor organization, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics.

When America was dragged into that war, we were hardly prepared for the enormity of the battles that were to come. The American Army was the 16th largest in the world, even smaller than Venezuela's. And the German Air Force was quite formidable due to its huge investment in aeronautics technologies.

Fortunately, due to the collective hard work of our people, and the innovation that brewed in our laboratories and factories, we overcame those initial disadvantages.

The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics made a huge contribution to the war effort. The research of the scientists and engineers

who would eventually wear the NASA badge helped our aviators deal with airplane wing icing, aircraft handling at high speeds, and crew rescues when planes had to ditch in water.

World War II provided unprecedented training and flying opportunities for two of the original seven Mercury astronauts, John Glenn and Deke Slayton. Both received military pilot training and flew combat missions during the war.

Indeed, these World War II experiences helped forge those brave men who became our first generation of space explorers. And we as a country are so much better off because of so many people like John Glenn who helped us win the war and created the wonderful prosperous country that we now enjoy.

Today, whether serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom or helping to fight terrorism, like the New York State Police, which got its start right here at the Cavalry Club, the men and women who wear our

nation's uniform have honored America. We owe so much to all these outstanding men and women and to their families.

As President Bush has said, "Today, all who wear the uniform of the United States are serving at a crucial hour in history, and each has answered a great call to serve our Nation on the front lines of freedom. As we continue to fight terrorism and promote peace and freedom, let us pray for the safety and strength of our troops, for God's blessing on them and their families, and for those who have lost loved ones.

At this time, I would like to invite all our veterans, those who served during World War II, in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, Desert Storm and in the military up to today to stand up and be recognized.

Throughout our country, and especially within the NASA family, we also recall this Memorial Day the heroic fallen members of our Columbia STS-107

crew, Air Force Colonel Rick Husband, Navy Commander Willie McCool, Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Mike Anderson, Navy Captain Dave Brown, and Navy Captain Laurel Clark served their country with distinction wearing the uniform of the United States.

Indeed, they and Dr. Kalpana Chawla and Israeli Colonel Ilan Ramon made the ultimate sacrifice in their dedication to advancing the human condition by carrying the torch of exploration into the cosmos. This day, and every day, we remember their professional dedication to larger national purpose in their service to the public.

Now throughout its glorious 100-year history, the Cavalry Club has served to provide comradeship and good fellowship for those who have nobly served our country and their families.

This wonderful institution's members represent the best our country has to offer, and I could think of

no place I'd rather be than right here to help commemorate this Memorial Day and the Cavalry Club's Centennial. Your motto, "Always Up!" describes so well the spirit of tonight's occasion.

I am honored that you provided me the opportunity to pay tribute to America's veterans this evening and I am truly grateful for your warm welcome. Thank you and good evening.